

No. 2.

Price, Five Cents.

SHIELD WEEKLY



TRUE DETECTIVE STORIES • STRANGER THAN FICTION

SILHOUETTE OR SHADOW? or A Question of Evidence BY ALDEN F. BRADSHAW



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Silhouette or Shadow?

OR,

A QUESTION OF EVIDENCE.

By ALDEN F. BRADSHAW.

CHAPTER I.

SOMETHING WRONG.

"Mr. Officer! Mr. Officer!"

"Yis, mum!"

And Patrolman Patrick Maginnis gallantly tapped the rim of his gray helmet with the tip of the locust dangling jauntily from his wrist, and turned on his heel with military precision and toward the person who had addressed him.

This son of the "ould sod" was a new officer on the day force of the police patrol, and was proud of the distinction. His uniform was as fresh and bright as the circle of bright red galways adorning his roseate Irish face. He had a twinkle in his eye and

a smile on his broad mouth, for the party who had addressed him in his official capacity was a woman.

The party in question was a corpulent matron in middle life, with her large, round face reflecting at just that moment a state of serious mental anxiety and distrust.

She stood bareheaded on the stone steps of a reputable lodging-house, one of a long, brick block in a rather Bohemian quarter of the city. A narrow yard about three feet in width fronted each of the several houses, and was separated from the brick sidewalk by a wicked-looking picket fence of iron.

It was after ten o'clock on a cold winter morning, and the sun was shining.

"Yis, mum!" repeated Policeman Patrick Maginnis.

The woman came down the steps to impart her communication more confidentially, for the passers-by were numerous.

"I'm afraid there is something wrong with one of my lodgers, sir," she anxiously explained. "Would you mind advising me?"

"Is it a man or a woman, mum?" inquired Maginnis, possibly with an eye to contingencies.

"A man, sir! A young man named Carroll Banks."

"And phat makes you think there be anything wrong with him, mum?"

"Because he is not up yet, and it is nearly eleven o'clock."

"Not yit, mum!"

"Well, he never lies abed like this, and his door has been locked and the key taken away."

"Phat's your name, mum?"

"My name is Nancy Stratton."

"D'yé keep this lodging-house?"

"I do, yes! But what has that to do with it?" protested the woman. "If the lodger—"

"You will plaze answer me questions, mum, if ye want me advice!" counseled Mr. Maginnis, with an air of serious profundity. "Have ye banged good and hard on the man's door?"

"I have!"

"And he didn't wake up?"

"He did not! If he had, do you think I'd be out here palavering with you?" cried Mrs. Stratton, angrily. "What kind of an officer are you, anyway?"

"I know my bizness, mum!" frowned Mr.

Maginnis, with pursed lips. "How d'ye know the man's not gone out?"

"Because he never takes his key with him!" was the sharp rejoinder. "Besides, he was in his room late last evening, and has not been seen since. I feel sure he's in the room now, in one state or another!"

"Phat room is his, mum?" asked Mr. Maginnis, with oily imperturbation.

"It's the third floor front!" snapped the matron.

The patrolman backed away as far as the curbing, and, with an indescribable expression of study on his florid face, stared up at the plain red front of the lofty building.

But the closed windows of the third floor front conveyed to his mind no appreciable fund of information.

While he thus stood gazing, a quick, authoritative voice from near by sounded in his ears.

"What's the trouble, officer?"

Like a flash it brought Patrolman Maginnis to "attention."

And he at once recognized the erect, athletic figure and clean-cut, forceful face of the young detective, Sheridan Keene.

"Bedad, sir!" cried Maginnis, saluting, "this woman says there be something wrong wid one of her lodgers."

Keene swung round to the waiting woman, "Why do you think there is anything wrong, madam?" he demanded, gravely.

In a few words conveying about the same information as before, Mrs. Stratton explained the situation, which the detective thought best to investigate.

"I will go up to the room with you," he said, shortly. "Lead the way."

"Begorra!" said Mr. Maginnis, to himself, as the detective entered the house with the corpulent matron; "that devil of a Keene must be after thinking there's something wrong, as well as the woman! Sure, phat'll I do but be after sendin' word to the chafe inspector!"

CHAPTER II.

THE CRIME IN THE BOHEMIAN QUARTER.

Keene followed the woman into the hall. It was carpeted with a heavy Wilton, comparatively new. Well-furnished double parlors lay to the right, with a dining-room off the end of the hall.

In the latter room—a group of three or four women were standing, apparently talking in subdued tones, and with mystified and anxious faces.

Before climbing the stairs, which made upward opposite the front door, the landlady paused to ask, rather doubtfully:

"You spoke to the officer like one in authority, sir. Are you?"

"Yes, madam. My name is Sheridan Keene. I am a detective."

"Then I am glad you happened along, sir. Please come this way. I will show you Mr. Banks' door."

"What is the man's full name, madam?"

"Carroll Banks, sir."

"Ah! I know of him. How long has he been lodging here?"

"For ten days, sir. He came here a stranger. May I ask you to tell me just who he is?"

"If you are wrong in your apprehensions, and nothing out of the ordinary has oc-

curred, Mr. Banks himself can inform you, if he so desires. That is not my business."

It was said with quiet courtesy, but in a way that gave no encouragement to further inquiries, and already the two had ascended the second flight of stairs and reached the third landing. There still was one above.

Mrs. Stratton at once indicated a door toward the front.

"That is the room, sir."

Keene listened for a moment, then bent and sniffed at the key-hole, and finally knocked loudly on the panel.

The summons brought no response.

Silence only—a silence that became irresistibly grim and uncanny as the moments passed.

"I've tried knocking, sir, in vain," muttered Mrs. Stratton, dubiously.

"There is no odor of gas," rejoined Keene. "How do you know that Mr. Banks has not gone out?"

"I don't know, sir! I know only that he was here late last night, and has not been seen this morning. Besides, he never has locked his door in this way and carried off the key."

"Haven't you a duplicate key?"

"No, sir, I have not, and Mr. Banks knows it. He has always left the door unlocked, so that I may enter to put the room in order."

Here two of the women whom Keene had noticed in the dining-room came timidly up the stairs. One was young and pretty, and quite stylishly dressed. The other was a saffron maiden by the name of Quincy, with a very yellow skin, and with golden ringlets to match. Having overheard what last had been said, the saffron maiden approached, and

aired her convictions in quite a decisive fashion.

"I'm just positive that some awful thing has happened in that room!" she declared, shrilly, shaking an animated accompaniment with her yellow curls. "I heard terribly angry voices in there last night, and not a sign has been seen of Mr. Banks this morning. I slept hardly a wink all night, I was so nervous."

"Step back a little," Keene now said, curtly; "and I'll try to force the door."

And drawing away a few steps, while he waved the women aside, the detective threw all his weight against the closed door. Twice and thrice this was repeated, but the stanch woodwork held firm, and the landlady ventured to exclaim, nervously:

"I'm afraid you'll hurt yourself, Mr. Detective!"

"Don't be alarmed about my hurting myself," said Keene, shortly. "Is there a locksmith near?"

"Two blocks away, sir."

"Send for him," commanded Keene. "I'll wait. There is no occasion for battering down the door."

The spinster's stylish companion at once volunteered to go for the smith, and Keene nodded his approval and coolly took a seat on the upper flight of stairs, the landlady and Miss Quincy, standing nervously in the narrow hall.

Addressing the latter, the detective took up her recent observations.

"You say you heard voices in altercation last night, my good woman. Where were you at the time?"

"In my room, sir. That one back there."

"Could you distinguish what was said?"

"No, sir; only the sound of the voices."

"Men's voices?"

"Two of the speakers were men, and one a woman," replied Miss Quincy. "Or, rather, sir, she was but little more than a whisp of a girl."

"You saw her then?"

"Yes, sir."

"How was that?"

"When I came to my door to lock it for the night, I opened it for a moment to glance into the hall. The girl had just come out of this room, and was hurrying down the stairs."

"Was she alone?"

"Yes, sir."

"Can you describe her?"

"I caught only a glimpse of her, sir," demurred Miss Quincy. "But she seemed to be a slight girl of about medium height, and with a very pretty face."

"Light or dark?"

"Dark, sir, I should say, though she struck me as being very pale. But perhaps that was my imagination, sir, for after hearing such angry voices I guess I was quite pale myself."

"How old should you say the girl was?"

"About nineteen or twenty, sir."

"Did she leave the house at once?"

"I think so. I heard her close the front door."

"Do you know when she came here?"

"She probably came in with Mr. Banks, for I heard him enter his room, and presently the sound of both their voices."

"Were they in anger at that time?"

"Oh, no, sir! Quite the contrary, for I heard them laughing. I do not think there

was any trouble till after the other man came."

"He came in later, did he?" asked Keene, with an interest that was steadily increasing.

"I did not hear him enter. Yet I imagine so, sir, for I did not hear his voice till later."

"Didn't he knock at Mr. Banks' door before entering?"

"I did not hear him."

"What time was it when you heard the dispute?"

"About a quarter after eleven."

"Before the girl had gone?"

"Both before and after."

"Then the strange man remained after the girl had gone?" exclaimed Keene.

"Yes, sir."

"You are sure of that?"

"I am positive, sir! It was after the girl left that the dispute became the most violent."

"Did you hear any indications of a personal conflict?"

"No, sir. It appeared to be a conflict of words only."

"Could you identify the stranger by the sound of his voice?"

Miss Quincy hesitated, but finally shook her ringlets.

"I don't think I could, sir," she replied, doubtfully. "It was quite a deep, heavy voice and that's all I can say of it. I could not distinguish a single word that was said, sir, and I did not see the stranger at all. Neither did I hear him depart."

"And all this occurred about eleven o'clock?"

From then till the half after, sir."

"Mrs. Stratton, has it been the habit of this man Banks to receive——"

"Oh, sir, here is the locksmith!"

Detective Keene now was beginning to apprehend something serious in the affair, but the appearance of a slouch hat over the baluster rail, and the diminutive figure of a bent man laboriously climbing the stairs at the heels of the sylish young lady, led him to drop further inquiries until he should have established actual need for them.

The locksmith shambled into the hall, jingling a huge ring of assorted keys, and straightway began his operations at the door. The work required but a few moments. Presently the bolt was heard to shoot, when the detective instantly thrust the mechanic aside and laid his hand on the knob of the door.

"Remain here in the hall, all of you!" he commanded, sharply. "If there is anything amiss in this room, I wish to investigate it before anything is disturbed. I will leave you in suspense only briefly."

He gave the instructions with a display of authority not wisely to have been disregarded, and immediately entered, closing the door behind him.

The chamber was square, with evidently a smaller room adjoining, the door of which was closed.

At a glance his experienced eyes took in the main features of the larger room.

There was but one window, which was closed, with the curtain lowered. There were no lace draperies. The furniture was a new parlor set in purple plush, a cherry centre-table, and a sideboard to match against the left wall. On this were several decanters

and glasses, a cut-glass jar of fancy crackers, part of a Dutch cheese on a china plate, and an open box of cigars.

On the table was a small tray of japanned wood, containing two liquor glasses. One was empty and standing upright. The other had been overturned, and its contents spilled in the tray. The close, stuffy air of the room was heavy with the odor of the liquor.

Quickly approaching the door of the inner chamber, Detective Keene threw it open.

A shocking spectacle instantly met his gaze.

The room was furnished with a bed, one chair and a chiffonier. It had but one window, which, like that in the adjoining room, was closed, with the curtain drawn nearly to the lower sash.

Upon the unopened bed, stretched diagonally across it, still and cold in death, lay the rigid figure of a young man, still clad as when he had entered. His bloodless hands still held in convulsive clutch the snowy coverlid, his head was thrown back, his distorted face upturned, and his white throat revealed with terrible distinctness the livid marks of the hands and fingers which had throttled the life from out his body.

"Good heavens!" muttered Keene, shocked for the moment "The landlady was right!"

Of the crime, and its horribly brutal character, there could be no possible doubt.

Before the startled detective could give further consideration of the tragic picture, his quick ear caught the sound of a deep and commanding voice from the direction of the hall.

"Make room here, please! Allow me to pass!"

Detective Keene wheeled about as the outer door was unceremoniously opened, and at once beheld the imposing figure and gravely forceful face of his superior officer, the head and front of the Boston secret service—Chief Inspector Watts.

CHAPTER III.

A MYSTERIOUS TRAGEDY.

Chief Inspector Watts was not surprised at finding Detective Keene on the scene. Through Maginnis and the division superintendent he already had been informed of the fact by wire.

"Good-morning, Keene," he at once said, brusquely. "What do you find here?"

"A crime of the most brutal character, Chief," said Keene

"Do you mean it?"

"See for yourself."

Inspector Watts surveyed the inner room with outward indifference. Whatever his feelings, he was one who rarely suffered them to show on the surface.

"The man has been strangled," he said, presently. "Brutal, indeed. How long have you been in here?"

"Scarce a minute, sir."

"He has been dead some hours. Do these people know him?"

"I know him by reputation, sir," said Keene. "His name is Carroll Banks. He is the youngest son of Perry Banks, the wealthy jeweler."

"Is he married?"

"Not to my knowledge, sir."

"Hasn't he been living with his parents?"

"He has been lodging here for ten days, I am told. He has been a rather popular

clubman, and in a sly way was inclined to be fast. I fear, Chief, that there is a rather dark side to this affair, and that the truth will not be easily obtained."

"You've been making some inquiries?" said Inspector Watts, quickly.

"Yes; while waiting for the locksmith."

"What have you learned?"

In a few words Keene imparted the information gathered from Miss Quincy and the landlady, and the Chief led the way to the outer room.

"The case wears a surface aspect," he now said, curtly. "Banks brought some young woman here; evidently a willing visitor. These glasses indicate that they had been drinking together."

"Or possibly the girl refused, since one is overturned and its contents spilled."

"You are right. That speaks well for the girl. Their relations seem to have offended some third party, possibly a brother, a betrothed, or a husband, who followed them to this room. An angry interview occurred. The girl departed, or was sent away, frightened. The altercation between the men continued, till personal violence and the murder of Banks resulted. Then the criminal extinguished the gas, secured the windows and door, and stole from the house. That's the surface aspect. We'll see if aught lies beneath."

And Chief Watts raised the curtain, then unfastened and threw open the window. For a moment he gazed down at the red face of the building and the picket fence far below, then abruptly turned back and closed the door of the room in which the body lay.

"Bring those women in!" he commanded. "I'll question them further."

Keene stepped to the hall door and obeyed.

"As you apprehended, Mrs. Stratton," he gravely explained, "your lodger is dead. Please step inside with your companions. The Chief Inspector wishes to question you."

This confirmation of her fears quickly sent the landlady into a clamor concerning the threatened reputation of her house, but the authoritative voice of the Chief as quickly cut her short.

"Silence!" he commanded, sternly. "Yours is not the first house to suffer such a tragedy. Listen to me, now, and answer my questions. Just when did Mr. Banks engage these rooms and come here to lodge?"

"One week ago Monday last, sir," moaned Mrs. Stratton, too subdued by her questioner's austerity to give further expression to her feelings.

"Did he give any reasons for coming here?"

"He said that he only desired the rooms for a time, and he paid two weeks in advance."

"Is this his furniture?"

"He furnished this room, sir, but not the bedroom. He thought my set here was not nice enough."

"Did he say why?"

"No, sir."

"Has he been in the habit of receiving visitors?"

"I don't know of his having had any before last night, sir."

"Has he slept here each night?"

"Yes, sir."

"How about days?"

"He went away each morning, and seldom returned before evening."

"Early or late?"

"About ten o'clock, sir, usually."

"He was later last night. Did you see him?"

"No, sir."

"Did you see the lady who came here with him?"

"I did not."

"Or the man who is said to have been here?"

"No, sir."

"Who admitted the latter at your front door?"

"He must have entered without ringing, sir. I always answer the bell in the evening; but no person rang last night. I was about my room, which is off the back parlor, until nearly midnight."

"Do you habitually leave your front door so that one may enter without a key?"

"I do evenings, sir, till I retire for the night, because all of my lodgers are not provided with latch-keys; and I don't find it pleasant to answer the bell too frequently."

"It is a careless way to leave your door!" said Inspector Watts, curtly.

"Nothing ill ever happened before, sir!" retorted the landlady, who could readily develop a spirit of her own. "Most of my lodgers are women, sir; and reputable women, as well."

"I didn't imply the contrary. Do you know of any person who saw the strange man enter or leave?"

"No, sir; I do not. He must have come and gone very quickly and quietly, or I should have seen or heard him myself."

"Has Mr. Banks had any mail delivered here?"

"No, sir."

"Anybody been here to inquire after him?"

"No, sir."

"Has he a trunk here?"

"No, sir."

"Humph! Evidently these rooms were taken temporarily, and for some special purpose!" growled the Chief, with the frown of one feeling rather baffled. "Which is the woman who saw the girl depart, Mr. Keene?"

"I am, please you, sir!" exclaimed Miss Quincy, tripping forward, with a shake of her ringlets.

"Could you identify the girl?" demanded Inspector Watts, with a searching glance.

"I think I could, sir."

"How was she dressed?"

"In a black suit and jacket, sir, with hat to match."

"Wear a veil?"

"No, sir."

"Did she look like a girl of means, or a poor girl? In a word, was she stylishly clad?"

"Her style did not impress me, yet she was dressed neatly," declared Miss Quincy, who rather enjoyed her prominence, possibly because of the novelty. "I noticed chiefly her face, of which I caught a quick glance. She appeared young and pretty."

"Did she see you?"

"She heard me open my door, sir, for she immediately quickened her step and hastened down stairs."

"As if wishing to escape unobserved?"

"Precisely, sir."

"How are these halls lighted at night, landlady?"

"With bracket lamps, sir, which are left burning till daylight."

"That's all, now, madam!" exclaimed the Chief; then he turned sharply to the young woman who had gone after the locksmith. "Are you a lodger here, also?"

"Yes, sir," she bowed, composedly. "But I occupy a back room on the floor below, and I can add nothing to your present fund of information. I was abed and asleep at nine o'clock."

The Chief knit his brows. The testimony was not encouraging. He stood for a moment as if framing another question, then abruptly exclaimed:

"That's all, ladies! Vacate the room, please, all of you! Speak to the officer on the sidewalk, Mr. Keene, and order him up here. There's no use protesting, landlady! You must wait for particulars till I am ready to give them! First of all, this affair must have my official investigation."

And, despite the manifest umbrage of the landlady, whose impatience was scarce to be contained, Chief Inspector Watts again excluded the women from the room and closed the door.

Keene meantime had leaned from the window and called down to the officer. The Chief's carriage now stood at the curbing. A small crowd had collected near by, and the news of the crime had leaked out. Two women were crossing the street, with heads bare, and the withdrawal of the officer left the way clear for them to enter the house.

When Keene turned back into the room the Chief was using the sideboard for a desk,

and hurriedly writing two addresses upon a leaf torn from his notebook.

"Maginnis," he said, sharply, when that officer appeared at the door; "go send the district medical examiner here at once. His address is the upper one on this paper."

"Yis, sir!"

"Then go to the lower—it's the large jewelry house on Tremont street—and inform the proprietor that a young man said to be his son is dead here. Ask him to come at once and see if he can identify him."

"Yis, sir."

"Also send here the first officer you meet, to take your place at the house door."

Maginnis took the slip of paper tendered, respectfully touched his helmet, then vanished into the hall.

At the same moment the shrill, girlish voice of some person on the stairs was heard, protesting forcibly:

"I guess I know! Do you think I'm blind, Mrs. Stratton? I guess I know what I saw with my own eyes!"

Chief Watts started slightly.

"What have we here?" he muttered, striding to the door.

He was met at the threshold by the two women whom Detective Keene had lately seen crossing the street.

CHAPTER IV.

WHAT POLLY MARKS SAW.

One of these persons was a middle-aged woman in a pale-blue morning-gown, bedecked with white lace. The other was a buxom young servant-girl, with round cheeks, a pretty face, and the brightest of bright black eyes.

"What do you want here?" demanded the Chief, the moment he saw them.

The elder at once made known her mission.

"I saw the people gathered about the street door, sir, and was told that a crime had been committed. While I was at breakfast this morning, my table-girl casually remarked upon certain things which she saw last night from the window of her room across the way. Thinking her testimony might shed some light on this matter, I felt it was my duty to bring her over here."

"I'm obliged to you, madam," bowed the Chief, with rather less austerity. "Is this the girl?"

"Yes, sir."

"What's your name, miss?"

"Polly Marks, please you, sir," said the girl, glibly.

"Step in here, Polly Marks, and I'll hear your story. None other, madam, if you'll pardon me! Clear your halls of all but your lodgers and this lady, Mrs. Stratton. If any object to vacating, speak to me and I'll attend to the case. Then close and lock your street door, and if anybody rings bring me the caller's name. See to this at once, madam."

With which curt instructions, Chief Inspector Watts again closed the door against the persistent curiosity of both landlady and lodgers.

Polly Marks had entered rather gingerly, as if afraid of beholding some sickening sight. She appeared relieved when the interior of the room met her gaze.

"Now, my girl, what have you to tell?" asked the Chief. "Don't be alarmed. Tell your story in your own way."

"Oh, I'm not alarmed, sir!" said Polly, with a quick flash of her dark eyes. "I've done nothing to be alarmed about. 'Twas the missus' idea bringing me over here at all."

"Well, what did you see last night that led her to do so?"

"I was sitting in my room, sir——"

"One moment! Show me your room from this window."

"That one, sir, on the top floor," said Polly, indicating a chamber in one of the houses of a block across the way. "The one where the curtain's blowing."

"Very good. It is directly opposite, and a story higher than this. Now go on."

That this girl was unusually bright there could be no doubt. Keene pricked up his ears and slipped his notebook and pencil into the palm of his hand.

"I was sitting by the window," began Polly Marks, when Inspector Watts interrupted her:

"Do you know the hour?"

"Just before it struck eleven, sir. While I sat looking down into the street I saw a man and woman come along and enter this house. The man was the one who had this room, sir."

"Did they approach on this side of the street?"

"Yes, sir."

"From which direction?"

"That, sir."

"Walking fast or slow?"

"Medium like, sir!" said Polly, not at all confused by the Chief's fusillade of questions.

"Could you see them plainly?"

"Not so very, sir. Still, I could see them

the same's anybody sees in the evening. There's an electric light on the corner, sir."

"That's a hundred feet away. Could you see their faces?"

"Not to know 'em, sir."

"Did either of them show any hesitation before entering?"

"I reckon not, sir. They turned right up the steps and went in. But what made me watch after that, sir, was a man who came along right after them; and I guess he was following them."

"Why so?"

"Because, after they went in, sir, he ran across to my side of the street and stood staring up at the windows of this house, as if he was trying to see what room they had. I leaned out to see what he was up to, sir; but he soon backed close against the house, and I couldn't see him for the gutter."

"Can you describe the man at all?"

"Only that he was a pretty big man, that's all. I couldn't see his face. But I'd say he was rather a young man, sir, by the way he walked."

"Smartly, do you mean?"

"Yes, sir."

"What more, Polly?"

"Well, sir, while I was trying to look down at him over the gutter, I saw the gas flash up in this room, so I stared over here. The man who had rooms here had just lit that burner there," and Polly Marks indicated one of the arms of the pendant chandelier; "and the girl was standing right here by the table. She was laughing and clapping her hands. The curtain was high up and I could see them plainly."

"Was the girl young?"

"I'd say about my age, sir, and dressed in black. The window was shut, but I could see right in here. The man threw away his match, and was laughing at something the girl had said. Then he turned and said something to the girl, and she let him kiss her; and very kind like he seemed about it, sir!"

"Respectful, do you mean?"

"Yes, sir. And then he came and pulled down the curtain, sir."

"And you were unable to see anything more?"

"Not then, sir!" exclaimed Polly, whose bright eyes and feminine curiosity had supplied her with quite a fund of valuable information.

"But I'm not done yet, sir," she continued, volubly. "When I couldn't see in here, I went back to the party down below. I kind of thought there might be something up, and I wanted to know what 'twas."

"I'm glad you felt so!" said Inspector Watts, dryly. "What next?"

"Well, sir, there wasn't any next for quite a little time, and I'd begun to fear the man on the sidewalk had gone about his business. But pretty soon I saw him cross the street again, and he ran up the steps and entered this house."

"With a key?"

"No, sir. He went right in, as if he already knew the door would open."

"Can you state whether or not he was one of the male lodgers here?"

"I know he was not, unless he is a new one, sir. Except the man who has this room, there have been but two. Both of them are small men, and I happen to know 'em both!" added Polly, with a quick smile and blush.

"Did the stranger hurry?"

"Rather, sir."

"Were there many people passing at that time?"

"None at all, sir. The street is quiet at night."

"Well, anything more?"

"I didn't think there'd be, but there was!" exclaimed Polly, with a toss of her head. "I guessed there might be a muss up in this room if that other man got in, and I was sorry the curtain was down. I didn't see anything for a time, sir, but after that I saw the shadow of the big man on the curtain. And 'twas plain as day, sir, what he was doing."

"And what was he doing?"

"He was trying to keep somebody from jumping out the window!" declared Polly, with added assurance.

Chief Inspector Watts stared at her for a moment, then demanded bluntly: "How do you know?"

"Because he had his arms stretched right across it, sir, just like that!" cried Polly, with her own buxom arms wide extended. "I can swear that's what he was doing, sir, though I didn't see the shadow of the one he was trying to stop. And he moved to one side again after a minute or so, and—and I didn't see anything more till the girl came out of the house."

"About how long had she been there?"

"Mebbe a quarter hour, sir."

"Did she come out alone?"

"Yes, sir; and hurried away in that direction."

"The same from which she had come."

"Yes, sir."

"Did you see anything more?"

"Not much, sir. I sat watching the window for a time, but I didn't see any more shadows. But I saw the gas put out a little later; and pretty quick after that the big man came out the front door."

"Which way did he go?"

"After the girl, sir."

"Did he hurry away?"

"He walked quite fast, sir."

"And then?"

"Then?" echoed Polly Marks, demurely. "Then I went to bed, sir!"

Was the solution of this tragedy hidden within the disclosure of this artless girl?

Chief Inspector Watts turned to the one other occupant of the room.

"What do you say, Keene?" he asked, gravely. "Do you think of anything more?"

"Ask her," said Keene, deliberately, "if she saw any other person enter or leave the house?"

"No, sir, I did not!" Polly Marks answered, quickly.

"And how long would you say it was, from the time the man and girl entered until the strange man departed after the light had been extinguished?"

"Just about half an hour, sir."

"I don't think of anything more," said Keene, indifferently.

"Shall I go now, sir?" asked Polly of the inspector.

The latter drew up his portly figure, and turning to the inner room laid his hand on the knob of the door.

"Not quite yet, my girl," he replied, with considerable gentleness. "I first wish to impose a rather unpleasant sight upon you, and

ask you to add to the service you already have done me. A man lies dead on the bed in this side room, Polly Marks. I want you to look at him, and tell me if he is the man you saw light the gas and kiss the girl. Will you do this for me?"

"Is—is there any b-b-blood, sir?" faltered Polly, with the roses fading from her cheeks.

"None, my girl."

"Then I will if—if I must."

"Do so, then! It will not be necessary for you to enter the room."

The Chief opened the door.

The girl hesitated, trembling, then nerved herself to approach the threshold—and then shrank back with a low, shuddering cry, and covered her eyes with her hands.

"Yes, that's the man!" she cried, faintly; and Detective Keene poured her a sip of wine from the sideboard.

"Thank you, my girl," said Inspector Watts. "You are quite positive of this fact?"

"I can swear to it if need be!" said Polly, with great earnestness manifest in her pale face. "Oh, but he has come to an awful end! That big man must have killed him before he put out the light and left the house!"

She had voiced to the letter the present opinion of the Chief Inspector of the detective service.

So much for the eyes and the voice of Polly Marks.

With the dismissal of the girl, who plainly had told her whole story, the landlady again appeared at the door, followed by the district medical examiner for whom the Chief had sent.

The results of the further investigations of that morning may be briefly stated.

That Carroll Banks had been brutally murdered at a late hour the previous night, there was no room for doubt.

The method adopted was equally apparent. On the young man's neck were the livid bruises of the merciless hands of the assassin, evidently those of a large and powerful man, against whom the other must have been but as a child.

The body was clothed as when Banks had entered from the street, save alone the hat which had been discarded. In his pockets was found a moderate sum of money, a ring of keys and his watch; but there were neither cards nor letters to give a clew to the solution of the tragedy, or to reveal the identity of his feminine companion.

The floors of the rooms offered nothing in the way of additional evidence, nor did subsequent inquiry among Mrs. Stratton's other lodgers shed further light on the affair.

The victim's father, whose grief needs no portrayal, could impart only that his son, then about twenty-two, had been a wayward youth, and frequently had lived away from his home for weeks at a time. Of the girl in black the father knew absolutely nothing.

The temporary disposal of the remains having been left to the medical examiner, whose duty required a professional autopsy, Inspector Watts and Sheridan Keene left the house together.

"Well, Shed, what do you make of it?" asked the Chief.

"The discovery of the girl in black and the big man described by Polly Marks are quite necessary," observed Keene.

"I'll land them, however, if I press into service every officer on the force," declared the Chief, grimly.

"I hope so," nodded Keene. "Still, there are thousands of big men in the city, and thousands of pretty girls who dress in black. The solution of the case hinges upon but one of each."

CHAPTER V.

HEADING OFF THE DOGS.

With glaring leaders the evening papers of that date published their stories of the crime, and before night the main features not only were public property, but the fact also announced that the entire detective force was in hot search after the pretty girl in black and the stranger who had tracked her to the chambers of Carroll Banks. That this bold stranger was the assassin was a belief very generally accepted and expressed. How much of this was authoritative, and how much sensational exaggeration by the reporters is here immaterial.

As usual in such cases, the name of the Chief Inspector alone appeared in the newspapers' accounts of the investigation of the mystery, and the part played that morning by Detective Sheridan Keene received scarcely cursory notice.

Between these two officers, however, there existed a friendliness and co-operative spirit in which rivalry had no part. With characteristic discernment, Chief Watts had been quick to appreciate not only the modesty and reserve of the young officer who for two years had been his subordinate, but likewise the fact that in Detective Keene he had a

man of far more than ordinary acquirements and natural acumen.

These attributes were not the result of chance. In early life Keene had determined on the vocation he would adopt when a man, and had trained himself accordingly. Endowed with an observing eye, an analytical mind, keen to appreciate details, and a pronounced faculty for detecting and adjusting obscure relations, he further had equipped himself by untiring study to the aim in view, not only of the languages, chemistry, chirography, physical culture and the practical methods of the most successful votaries of the detective art, but also the physiognomy of Lavater, until the human countenance became to him a far more reliable index of character than may, without a knowledge of the science, be easily imagined.

Hence it was but natural that Chief Watts had formed for him a most kindly affection, and soon had fallen into a way not only of consulting his opinion and judgment, but also of assigning to him the most mysterious and complicated cases that came within the field of his official investigation.

That the Carroll Banks affair might prove to be one of these seemed imminent, unless the publicity given it should bring voluntary testimony from some quarter. Superficially, it appeared conclusive that the stranger who had been seen to enter and depart was the criminal; but the superficial view is rarely the one an astute and experienced detective is prompt to accept.

Early the following morning Keene was seated in a private office which he maintained in Pemberton Square, separate from his room at Headquarters, when a man hurriedly en-

tered, whose pale countenance evinced no ordinary state of perturbation. That he came with a definite mission, and was in desperate haste to relieve his mind, were declared with his first words.

"I say, Keene," he cried, abruptly; "I'm in a devil's own scrape, and you must help me out of it! What case are you on—any? Thank God, I find you here! I was mortally afraid you might be away, for you are the only man on earth capable of pulling me out of my awful mess! What in thunder are you laughing at?"

"Partly at your garrulous excitement," said Keene, waving him to a chair; "and partly at the absurdity that you, Ben Herrick, can be in any scrape serious enough to warrant it."

They were old and firm friends—fellow students in college, fellow clubmen since; and Ben Herrick was widely known as one of the brightest and most popular of the wealthy young men about town.

"Well, the scrape is serious enough to warrant it!" he rejoined, desperately; "and you'll not deny it!"

"What's the nature of it, Ben?"

"First of all," cried Herrick, with a head-shake like that of a baited bull; "I want to ask you one question!"

"Well?"

"Do you believe me a man of my word?"

"Better than believe, Ben! I know you are!"

"And would you take my word against the devil's own appearances to the contrary?"

Keene surveyed him gravely for a moment. His white face and glowing eyes indicated that only some very serious matter

could have actuated such a beginning as this.

"Yes, Ben," the detective said, quietly. "I would bank upon your honesty as soon as that of any man on earth!"

"Thank you, Shed!" said Herrick, feelingly. "But if I hadn't been sure of it, I'd not have come here. Surely not with such a disclosure as mine!"

"What is the disclosure, Ben?"

Herrick drew a long breath, and stared with wide eyes at his questioner.

"You know of that crime of night before last—the murder of Carroll Banks?" he demanded, hoarsely.

"Yes."

"And that the police are making a red-hot search for the man who followed him to his chamber?"

"Certainly."

"Well, sir," and Herrick threw back his head with something like passionate defiance of police and of law; "I am the man!"

"Is that so?" said Keene, quietly.

But he reached forth his hand, and turned the key in his door.

"You may gamble that I'd not say so if it weren't true—not to you, even!" Herrick added, warmly. "It is too infernally true for a joke!"

The detective looked him over for a moment—the fine, forceful face and splendid figure of this man who had approached him with disclosure threatening life itself. And it well might be believed. Polly Marks had well described her man; for Ben Herrick carried good six feet of brawn and tissue, with a breadth of shoulder and depth of chest evincing mighty prowess.

"But I'm not guilty of any crime, Shed!" he immediately went on. "I had nothing to do with the killing of Banks, and I know absolutely nothing about it. But I realize my situation, even though innocent, and you must pull me out of it."

"I hope, for your sake, I may be able to do so," said Keene, smiling faintly.

"If you cannot, no man can!" cried Herrick, warmly. "I resolved to come to you with the whole truth, knowing that you at least would believe me, and would turn heaven and earth to set me right. By doing this, moreover, I head off you dogs of the law who are after me; for my confession will refute a charge of attempting concealment. If you think it necessary to arrest and jail me, I'll swallow the dose; but I'd like to avoid it. It will go down smoother, however, if administered by you, Shed"

There was a rather affecting manliness in his impulsive utterances—those of a strong and ingenuous nature unexpectedly and heavily crossed with incriminating circumstances; Keene turned his chair a little and said, gravely:

"Tell me the whole story, Ben. What was your mission there?"

"First, say you believe my assertion of innocence!"

"I already have said that, Ben."

"Good! Put it there! And there's no man's blood on the hand you shake, though circumstantial evidence may yet bring me to a dance on air, as it has brought much better men before me. Now, Shed, I'll tell you."

He dropped forward with his arms on his knees, and fixed his fine dark eyes on the detective's attentive face.

"Shed, this man Banks, who was not half a bad fellow, yet as weak as a dish-rag when a girl was involved, had been making love to my sister Mollie; in fact, had proposed to her and had been taken under consideration."

"Well?"

"Ill, rather than well, my boy! The fact was not generally known. Mollie had made the matter her own little secret. But for ten days or more I had noticed that Banks was a stranger, and that Mollie was down in the mouth over something. So I took her alone day before yesterday, and by a dint of pumping drew the truth out of her, along with no end of tears. It seems that Banks had suddenly neglected her completely."

"Nothing more serious, Ben?"

"Oh, no, no! But, sir, I'm not that cad of a brother who stands round with his hands down, and sees his sister imposed upon," Herrick forcibly continued. "So I told Mollie to keep her mouth closed, and I'd mighty soon ascertain the meaning of this fellow's sudden indifference, and the true flavor of his intentions."

"Which was quite like you, Ben."

"Well, Shed, I'm a liar if I didn't run upon Banks in company with a girl that very evening. They were on one of the seats in Union Park, and I thought I'd best give him rope enough to hang him. I didn't dream that I might hang myself in the bargain. I watched the two till nearly eleven o'clock, when they rose to go. He appeared to have been pleading with the girl about something, with more or less argument, and to which she finally had assented."

"I follow you, Ben."

"And I followed them, Shed! I saw the

two enter the lodging-house, and that no key was used. I was a little warm around the collar just then, for I didn't like the scamp's duplicity, and the girl he had with him appeared too young and innocent to be suffered to meet evil, if wrong was intended, through any double-dealing dog; and I resolved I would haul him up to the ringbolt in his own room, if I could locate it. So I slipped across the street, and with good luck or bad I saw him light the gas in his chamber and draw the window curtain."

The expression of grave interest on the face of the detective underwent no change, yet he now would have known, even had his faith been less, that he was receiving the whole truth from this man.

"Well, Shed, I delayed briefly, and then made a bolt for the lodging-house door," continued Herrick. "I had no trouble entering, which I did quietly, and then went up over the stairs like a cat over a wet lawn. And the first that Carroll Banks knew of my proximity was when I had him by the collar and began hauling him over the coals, in a way he'd have remembered to his dying day had he lived to be a hundred."

"Go on, Ben."

"Well, sir, it appeared that he had lost his head over the girl he had with him, and who looked as innocent and sweet as an angel, and had promised to marry her there and then if she'd have him. It was for that they had come there, and he had planned to go for a clergyman, which I now truly believe he meant to do. But my infernal rage so alarmed the girl that, unobserved by either of us, she slipped out and away. Possibly my exposure of the scamp's disloyalty to Mollie

also wakened her fears. At all events, she slipped out of the room and dusted."

"What then?"

"I remained about ten minutes longer. It took me that long to say the whole of my little verse. Then I also departed. But Banks had the last word, I distinctly remember, which in effect was that he yet would marry the girl despite me, my sister or my whole family! I had cooled down a bit before leaving, and, thinking I possibly had made disturbance enough, I slipped down and out as quietly as possible, nor saw a soul on the way. That is the whole story, Shed! And you can imagine my horror and dismay when I read that Carroll Banks had been murdered that very night, and that his belligerent caller, myself, was suspected of the crime. Now, for Heaven's sake, Shed, who killed that man? And how are my skirts to be cleared of suspicion?"

"When the first question is answered, the second will be, and not before," said Keene, gravely. "Your position is quite as serious as you stated, Ben."

"Do you really think so?"

"I do, indeed. Only by placing the crime where it belongs can you be thoroughly exonerated. Does your sister know about and appreciate the entire situation?"

"Surely!"

"Who else?"

"Not a person save yourself."

"Then tell your sister to seal her lips, lest your life should be the forfeit. As the affair now stands, I shall make no immediate disclosure nor place you under arrest. But the time may come when I shall be forced to do both. I want your word that I may find

you at your home any evening after nine o'clock, until I shall have released you from the pledge."

"You have it, Shed!"

"Now answer a few questions. Was there any liquor drunk while you were in Banks' room?"

"Not a drop! But he had poured two glasses, one probably for the girl, which she evidently had declined. He had drunk his before I entered, and I upset the other in my excitement."

"I see. Now, do you know who the girl is?"

"I haven't the slightest idea."

"Did you hear no name mentioned?"

"No, I did not."

"Did she speak?"

"I did not hear her. In fact, prior to her departure, I was doing most of the speaking. She stood with her hands clasped, looking as if she was scared half to death."

"What did she look like? Did her clothes suggest nothing? Did she look like a girl of culture? a society girl? or something less?"

"Less!" exclaimed Herrick, instantly. "She had neither a look of culture, nor the poise of a society girl in such a situation. I would say she was some simple and very innocent person, possibly an upper servant."

"That helps!" said Keene, quietly. "You can identify her?"

"Among a thousand."

"She must be found. Now, Ben, one or two more. Did you lock the door of the room when you left?"

"No, sir!" replied Herrick, emphatically.

"Nor extinguish his gas?"

"No, sir!"

"Was there a light in his bedroom?"

"I think not. I cannot be sure, however, for the door between the rooms was closed."

"Ben," and the detective's voice fell the least fraction of a degree; "which of the two, Banks or the girl, betrayed an inclination to jump from the window?"

"Do what?" demanded Herrick, with genuine amazement.

"Jump from the window," repeated Keene, quietly.

"Neither of them! I don't know at what you are driving!"

Detective Keene stared absently at the floor for a few moments, then arose and unlocked his office door.

"Possibly, I will call round to your house some evening about nine," he said, indifferently; "and tell you at what I am driving. Be sure that I find you at home. I must ask you to leave me now, for I have an appointment at Headquarters."

Herrick at once complied.

His face was brighter than when he came.

CHAPTER VI.

A VISIT TO POLLY MARKS.

Detective Keene closed and locked his office, and crossed Pemberton Square. The Headquarters building faces the square from one end. At one side, in the angle formed, are some of the basement offices. These are occupied by the inspectors of police. Attached over the low windows without is a long sign—Bureau of Criminal Investigation. This was Detective Keene's immediate destination.

"Is the Chief in his room?" he quietly in-

quired of a clerk at the long desk in the general business office.

"Ah, good-morning, Mr. Keene," was the response. "No, he is not at just this moment. He was called down to State street a short time ago. I don't think he expected to remain long, however."

"I will leave him just a line on his desk."

"All right, sir."

Keene stepped into the inner office, and scribbled above his signature on a card:

"I will see you about noon, instead of at ten. There is a change of wind, of which I wish to take advantage."

It carried its own significance, and brought a curious smile to the keen blue eyes of Chief Inspector Watts when he read it.

This occurred at about the same time the writer of it was presenting himself at the rear door of the house in which Polly Marks was employed, and asking to see the mistress. It happened that she was in the kitchen at the time, hence readily responded.

"I am one of the officers who took the testimony of your servant yesterday morning, when you so kindly aided us in that unfortunate affair over the way," Keene blandly began. "If there is no objection, I would like to visit her room with her."

Though the madam wondered at his selecting the rear door, rather than ringing at the front, there was no objection to gratifying the desired favor; and Polly Marks, rosy and smiling, for she at once recalled Keene as the one who had poured her the wine, was accordingly sent to conduct the detective to her lofty chamber.

"Tain't put in order yet, sir," Polly be-

gan to apologize as they neared the room, but Keene smilingly interposed.

"Never mind that, my girl," he said, genially. "I'm not here to see whether it is or not."

"This is the room, sir."

It was small, with a single window, then open to admit the morning air. As they crossed the threshold, Keene took the girl by the arm.

"Stand there, Polly!" he laughed, softly. "I don't want you to go too near, lest you fall out."

Polly Marks flashed a sharp glance at him, but did not clearly understand him, nor guess why he restrained her.

"Not much danger of that, I think!" she exclaimed, brightly.

"Let's see! Which was the window of—of his room?"

"That one, sir."

"Ah, yes. Right opposite. I rather wanted to see how far it seemed, looking from over here. Quite a little distance, isn't it?"

"It seems farther at night, sir," vouchsafed Polly, innocently.

"Yet you managed to see quite plainly. I guess it's because you have such pretty bright eyes," smiled Keene, in a way that further pleased her, and diverted her by the very pleasure. "I suppose you could see plainer after the gas was lighted."

"Oh, yes, just for a minute, till he pulled down the curtain."

"But shadows show plainly on a curtain, I thought."

"Oh, yes, sir; the shadow was plain enough, but that only lasted two or three

"seconds," explained Polly, looking up, as if rather doubtful what all this might signify.

"Moved to one side, eh?" murmured Keene, indifferently.

"Yes, sir; to the left."

"I see. Yes, it's quite a wide street after all. By the way, did you say you saw a light in that little room where the bed is?"

"No, sir, I didn't say so. There wasn't any."

"Probably he hadn't had time to light that," said Keene, absently. "I guess that's all, Polly. I just wanted to see how far it looked from over here. Are all of those houses over there lodging-houses?"

"Most of 'em, sir."

"Pretty fair houses, too," commented Keene, turning to the hall. "I suppose you're friendly with most of the lodgers—I mean the young men, of course."

The girl flashed a roguish glance at his bantering eyes, then burst out laughing.

"Indeed, I am not!" she cried, "though some of 'em stare over here as if willing enough. But I'm a girl who minds her own affairs, sir."

"And that's a wise kind of a girl," laughed Keene. "Here is—"

"Oh, I don't want to be paid, sir!"

"I know that already, my girl," Keene kindly persisted, when she colored and drew away her plump, white hand. "But you see, Polly, I really have no better use for it."

"Then I thank you, sir."

"Don't speak of it, my girl! You've been bothered enough to have earned it. I fear we never shall find the party who committed that dreadful—"

"You can go out by the front door, sir, if you'd rather!"

"Well, it don't matter to me—stay! possibly your mistress might have a word to say to me! And she's down-stairs. I guess I'd better go down and out the way I came."

CHAPTER VII.

A MOVE IN A NEW DIRECTION.

At the hour of noon that day there occurred a conference between Chief Inspector Watts and Detective Keene, which was productive of speedy and startling results.

Soon after dark the next evening, it might have been a quarter before eight, a man emerged from a saloon and restaurant near Dover street, which was kept by a Swede and was quite a resort for Scandinavian laborers and seamen, and turned his steps in the direction of Massachusetts Avenue.

A plainly-dressed young man, who stood gazing into the window of a store on the opposite side of the street, presently followed him.

The shadow was Detective Keene.

The former was not a very evil-looking fellow, neither had he been drinking noticeably. Yet his youthful countenance, for he appeared to be but little older than twenty, wore an expression so sullen, grim and morose, that one would at once infer that his manifest broodings were far from creditable or agreeable.

By his looks he was a seaman, though not clad like a sailor. He wore a suit of dark blue, a gray woolen shirt, and a blue cap. But a certain roll in his gait, a swaying of his tall and powerful figure, together

with his tanned complexion and brawny dark hands, were suggestive of one who followed the sea.

He walked moderately and without apparent concern, and his mission took him through Massachusetts Avenue nearly to Commonwealth. There he wheeled about and returned for a hundred yards or thereabouts, when he turned again and covered about the same distance. This was repeated several times, and once he hung briefly at a near corner, covertly watching the door of a pretty brick dwelling nearly opposite. But at the end of a half-hour he abruptly started off and did not return.

Detective Keene now ceased his espionage, and presently accosted a patrolman, for whose approach he patiently waited.

"Is this your regular beat, Kennedy?" he asked, signifying the officer to the obscurity of a doorway.

"Yes, sir," was the reply, with a salute.

"Been on it long?"

"Nearly a year."

"Who lives in that house yonder, where the second floor is lighted and the curtains partly raised?"

"John Honeywell, sir, a real estate broker."

"Lived there long?"

"Since before my coming, sir."

"Large family?"

"Only self and wife, I think. They're quite young people."

"Many servants?"

"Think not, sir. See a stout woman at times, and a youngish one sometimes sweeping the walk."

"Is the young one pretty?"

"Very, sir."

"Family usually at home evenings?"

"Generally, sir."

"That's all, Kennedy! Stay! Don't turn your eyes upon that house again for a week."

"Very well, sir."

"Nor notice any person who appears to be watching it."

"All right, sir."

"Good-night, Kennedy."

"Good-night, sir."

Ten minutes later Detective Keene approached the house from the direction of Beacon street, and rang the bell. The stout woman mentioned by Kennedy answered it.

"I wish to see Mr. Honeywell," the detective said, conventionally. "Tell him it's about some land I wish to purchase."

"Phat name, sor?"

"Savage. He'll know."

It was the name of a well-known local real estate man, yet Mr. Honeywell wondered that he should have called at his home upon business. Nevertheless, he repaired to the reception-room into which Keene had been shown, when the latter instantly signed him to silence.

"How are you, Honeywell!" he exclaimed at the same time, and in tones meant for any too curious ears. "Pardon my intruding here and at such a time, but I leave town early in the morning for a month or more, and I first want to make an offer for the Gramley property, which I believe you hold for sale. Can't you give me on paper, if your library is unoccupied, just a rough draft of the lots, with the area of each and the frontage? Mrs. Savage, my wife, rather wishes me to build there."

"Well, Mr. Savage, I hope you'll decide to

do so!" responded the broker, who evidently was a man of brains and culture, and who had quickly appreciated the significance of this stranger's fluent fiction and expressive eyes. "Yes, I can give you a pencil sketch of the lots, though I'm not much of a draughtsman."

"Oh, anything will answer! Just a rough outline of the lots."

"You may have that much, surely. Come into the library. How are Mrs. Savage and the children?"

"First rate, thanks, all but the baby!" said Keene, with a laugh too hearty not to have been genuine. "She had the croup last night, and is rather off color. You've not been out to see us lately."

"No. Been meaning to come for some time. Deucedly busy though. Take a chair at the table, and I'll give you the plans on paper."

And Honeywell, as he flashed the electric, further displayed his acumen by closing the door by which they had entered.

"Allow me to commend your ready wit, sir!" Keene laughed, softly. "Now, I will properly introduce myself. I am Detective Keene, of the secret service."

"Your manner implied something of the sort, sir," Honeywell answered, gravely. "Yet I cannot imagine why you are here, Mr. Keene."

"Sit down, and I'll presently tell you. But please not speak my name again. Take a pencil and scratch off a few figures on that block of paper. That will be sufficient, thank you."

"If you were not a rather bright and magnetic young man, you might have met with

less compliance here," observed the broker, with some disapproval. "What is the meaning of this, sir?"

"It means that I want your aid in the interests of justice," replied the detective, with just the least display of authority, yet sufficient to indicate the attitude he was prepared to take if necessary.

"What is the case, sir?"

"That of a man murdered in a lodging-house in E street last Tuesday night."

"You amaze me!" gasped Honeywell, turning quite pale. "I have seen the newspaper accounts of it, but I know absolutely nothing more about it."

"I am quite aware of that fact, and it's barely possible the same is true of all the inmates of your house. That is the point upon which I am here to satisfy myself. You employ a young servant-girl, I believe?"

"Yes, I do! One Mary Gurney!" faltered the broker, with augmented perturbation. "But she cannot possibly be guilty of evil. Good Heavens, sir! she is one of the most innocent and artless girls I ever saw!"

"I will say here, Mr. Honeywell, that I do not now suspect her of implication in the crime," replied Keene, thinking it best to reassure him. "No harm will befall her if I am right. Justice requires, sir, that I shall follow out a certain thread of evidence to the end; and it is quite possible that this girl's personal safety may depend upon the co-operation I require of you."

"In that case you certainly may command me," said Honeywell, with genuine readiness. "Both my wife and self are very fond of Mary Gurney, regarding her almost with

parental feelings. She is a very lovable and guileless girl."

"I am glad to hear you say so. How long has she lived here with you?"

"For more than a year, sir. She is a Scandinavian girl, who came to this country with her mother about that time. The mother died on the day of the vessel's arrival, and the case was brought to my wife's notice by one of the charities with which she is identified. We have no children of our own, and my wife, rather affected by the sad features of the case, brought this orphan girl home. We never have regretted it, and I doubt not that some day we shall legally adopt her."

"Does she speak English?"

"Quite well, now, sir. But at first she could speak only the Swedish tongue."

"I am familiar with it," nodded Keene, smiling oddly. "I now must warn you to make no disclosure of this interview, Mr. Honeywell; not even to your wife. Far more than you imagine may depend upon your discretion, sir."

"I will be guided by your directions, sir."

"Now answer one or two questions, please. Has Mary Gurney had tolerable liberty here?"

"She has, indeed!"

"Been free to come and go when she pleased?"

"Within reasonable limits, yes."

"Been out much evenings?"

"About twice a week."

"Remain out late?"

"No, sir. Seldom as late as nine o'clock."

"Has she been out since Tuesday evening?"

"I believe not—in fact, am sure of it."

"Many young men callers?"

"None, sir!"

"Any letters left here for her?"

"I never have known of one."

"Has she ever made references to a gentleman friend, or a lover?"

"Possibly to my wife; never to me. But I am sure my wife would have informed me."

"What other servants do you employ?"

"Only a woman who looks after the kitchen and the cooking."

"Very good. You said Mary Gurney seldom remained out late in the evening. How about last Tuesday night?"

"Last—"

Honeywell caught himself with a start, then grew a shade paler when he added:

"As a matter of fact, sir, my wife and I were in Providence all of Tuesday night. The occasion was the wedding of my wife's niece. But I quickly can learn from the cook whether Mary was out that night."

"You will do nothing of the kind, neither now or hereafter!" said the detective, quite sternly. "You will please remember—"

"Pardon! I do remember, now!" Honeywell apologized with grave courtesy. "I am quite upset by the affair, but I will not forget myself again."

"I feel sure I may depend upon you. I wish you now would summon the girl here for a moment, that I may see her. Frame some trivial occasion, and I will take just a glance at her by means of the mirror. I don't want her to observe any interest on my part."

"Very well, sir."

"Now, then."

Honeywell pressed a button in the wall,

and presently the door was opened from the hall.

"You rang, sir?"

The voice of the speaker, the girlish figure, the pale, sweet face, the soft, dark eyes—all declared Mary Gurney to be a girl of inherent simplicity, gentleness and virtue.

The detective gave her but a glance. It was all this student of Lavater required.

"Please step up stairs, Mary," said Honeywell, kindly, "and ask Mrs. Honeywell to send me down the small package of documents which lies on my table. There is a rubber band about it."

"Yes, sir."

The detective leaned over and said softly, when the girl had departed:

"I shall leave immediately after her return. I think you are right; but for her sake, at least, make no disclosures!"

"You have my word, sir."

"Can I see you at your office at ten tomorrow morning?"

"Yes! Without fail!"

"Expect me without fail. I shall have very important instructions for you!"

CHAPTER VIII.

WEAVING THE NET.

"Have you made sure, Detective Keene, that this man is under constant and reliable surveillance?"

The speaker was Chief Inspector Watts.

It was approaching midnight, the hour when most people of a great city are wrapped in slumber; in that peaceful sleep which these tireless liegemen of the mighty law insure us.

Though the cloak of night hung heavy

without, the glow of white light was brilliant in the private office of the Chief, accentuating the forceful expression of the fine countenance on which it fell strongest, the brows drawn low with thought, the coldly intense and searching blue eyes, and the firm determined lips.

It was a period of conference over Detective Keene's report to his superior. It was a conference on which might hang a human life, or at least that retribution required by law and justice.

Keene sat opposite.

The two were alone.

"Yes, Chief, I have made sure that this man is constantly shadowed."

"Do you know where he is at present?"

"Probably he is at his lodgings, since the saloon which he has been frequenting would now be closed for the night."

"Have you learned the man's name?"

"Only that his last name is Asbrand. He is a Swede, was lately a sailor on the English ship *Conqueror*, and arrived in Boston nine days ago. I do not think the man's first name is known in the saloon kept by Gaddorf, the Swede, nor in fact much about the stranger. And while I have made all of my inquiries there in their own language, I have been much more circumspect about it than I might have been if I did not realize that positive proof against this man Asbrand may become much more difficult to establish if he discovers that he is suspected."

"Let's run over the points in the case once more, which may suggest something further," said the Chief, with a closer knitting of his brows. "This Asbrand lodges in

the adjoining house, and occupies the room corresponding to that of Carroll Banks."

"Precisely, Chief."

"He was known to have been in this room late Tuesday evening, but was absent from the house early next morning, without having been seen or heard to leave."

"So I have ascertained."

"Still, assuming him guilty, and to have gained the street as we suspect, it might be difficult to prove, against his positive assertion, that he did not leave his own lodgings unheard during the night."

"That is very true, sir."

"Are you positive that your examination of the distance between the several windows of the two houses, and of the brick-work below them, absolutely sustains our theory?"

"Yes, Chief, or I would not have acted upon it. At the level of each floor and along the entire face of the block, apparently to relieve its plainness, a single layer of bricks protrudes nearly an inch. The distance between each of the several windows can readily be spanned by a man of very long reach. It would be easily possible for such a man, particularly a seaman accustomed to movements aloft, to work along outside from one window to the next."

"Assuming Asbrand's room to have been in darkness that night, and himself actuated by some desperate or vengeful purpose, he could have left his own window, lowering it after his egress, and by means of the ledge of bricks and the outer casings, have worked along the face of the wall till he had passed the sitting-room of Banks and gained the bed-room window."

"It is true that we found that window

closed next morning. But the previous evening was very mild. It is a hundred to one, Chief, that Banks left that bedroom window at least partly open before he went out of doors."

"In which case Asbrand could easily have effected an entrance, you believe, in the way suggested?"

"I am sure of it, Chief."

"It would have been a desperate move."

"I believe he was a desperate man."

"Then, upon these assumptions, the figure seen upon the illumined curtain of Banks' sitting-room by Polly Marks, was a silhouette rather than a shadow."

"Precisely, Chief! And I was immediately led to that belief by the disclosure of Ben Herrick, to the effect that no person in the room had attempted to jump from the window, or had stood with arms stretched across it."

"I see."

"Hence my visit to the room of the servant. She could not, in the darkness, have seen the dark figure against the obscure face of the building. It would have been visible to her only against the illumined curtain, when very naturally it would have appeared like the shadow of a person in the room. Her testimony further shows that this figure, when it disappeared, moved toward Banks' bedroom."

"Are Herrick and Asbrand alike in figure?"

"Precisely! Both are tall, powerful men."

"I think you are right, Keene," nodded the Chief. "Asbrand may have overheard enough of the altercation to believe it could

be turned to account in diverting suspicion from himself."

"Quite likely, Chief!"

"He certainly would not have ventured there from the street prior to Banks' entrance. That would have been taking even longer chances."

"Furthermore," added Detective Keene, "no man, having just committed such a crime, would have had the nervous reserve to return by the desperate way he must have come. Instead, he rightly conjectured that Herrick had departed unobserved, and that if he could do likewise, suspicion most naturally would fall upon Herrick. Hence he hurriedly closed the window in the bedroom, extinguished the gas and secured the door, and stole from the house. He did not return to his own lodgings, lest in some way that might prove significant, but rather took the chance that his absence next morning would not be noticed."

"That is a point well taken," nodded the Chief. "Upon this theory it likewise is evident that Polly Marks was so absorbed in watching the window opposite that she failed to observe Herrick's egress from the front door."

"Surely!"

"Upon her testimony, then, leaving Asbrand out of the case, it would appear conclusive that Herrick was the man who extinguished the gas and departed, securing the room door after the crime had been committed. At the best, Keene, your friend Herrick has had a very close call!"

And the grave, blue eyes of Chief Inspector Watts met the gaze of his companion with one of those quick, penetrating flashes

of which they at times are eminently capable, and which carries with it the fire of resistless conviction.

"True, Chief, indeed!" assented Keene. "And I think Asbrand shrewdly assumes that his safety is best insured by his retaining his lodgings, and that the general belief that the party to the altercation that night is the criminal, serves greatly to give this Swede his assurance."

"No doubt of it," exclaimed the Chief, swinging round in his chair. "But we now will weave a net to catch the vulture! While there may be no collusion between him and Mary Gurney, there certainly exists some relation."

"Undoubtedly!"

"But the girl's nature and character seem to be eminently superior to his. I am rather inclined to believe that Banks really meant to marry her; a belief sustained by the fact that this modest girl could have been induced to visit his rooms, as well as by his conduct as observed by Herrick and Polly Marks. Now, Keene, to weave the net!"

"I am all attention, Chief."

"You say Asbrand's conduct to-night was that of a man anxiously watching for Mary Gurney to emerge from the house in which she is employed."

"Decidedly so!"

"She has not been out since the night of the crime."

"No, sir."

"Perhaps she fears encountering Asbrand."

"Very likely, sir! Furthermore, he acts like a man who dares not call at the house to see her. He is careful even in approach-

ing the neighborhood, and crafty in his way of watching the house."

"More and more convincing!" nodded the Chief. "It appears evident that the two have not met since the crime was committed. If they can be brought unexpectedly together, with no suspicion that the meeting has been planned and is observed by others, it is a hundred to one that their intercourse will reveal their precise relations, which are evidently restraining this girl from coming forward with the truth."

"All of those odds, Chief!"

"They both are Scandinavians. Possibly they will fall back upon their native tongue."

"I am familiar with it, Chief," said Keene, simply.

"Very good! You must overhear what is said. It then may become easy to force, if necessary, a confession from the girl. At all events, we shall settle ourselves concerning Asbrand."

"And the method?"

"I will tell you! Draw round here!"

CHAPTER IX.

NETTING THE VULTURE.

"Now, Mr. Honeywell, these instructions are to be followed to the very letter! Much will depend upon it!"

It was half-past ten the next morning, and Detective Keene, speaking with impressive gravity, sat with Broker Honeywell in the latter's office.

"They shall be followed to the letter, sir," was the reply. "You have only to impart them."

"And you fully appreciate that their precise execution is seriously important?"

"I do! State them, Detective Keene!"

"Two blocks east from your residence, Mr. Honeywell, there is a blind court making off the main avenue, having in it three dwellings which are four or five rods from the court entrance."

"I know the place well, sir."

"At a certain time in the evening, and action at the precise time will be absolutely essential, you are to effect what I shall presently advise. I cannot say whether it will be required this evening, or to-morrow, or the next; but in all probability to-night."

"How am I to know?"

"I will tell you, sir. The time will be near eight o'clock, one way or the other. Have your hall lighted, as usual, but not your drawing-room. You and your wife, if she be at home, will please occupy your second floor front, as I found you last evening."

"I follow you, sir."

"There is much bicycle riding along the avenue in front of your residence. A signal, upon which you are to quickly, yet compositely act, and for which you are to listen from your chamber, yet without betraying the fact to any person outside, will be the quick, intermittent ringing of a bicycle alarm bell. This will be rung by a lad, apparently toying casually with the wheel stationed at the curbing opposite your house."

"May I not be misled by the bells on other wheels, sir?"

"No, sir! All liability to that will be effectually removed."

"Go on, then."

"On hearing the signal, which will be sustained only sufficiently long to serve the purpose, you will at once descend to your

library and summon both your cook and Mary Gurney. Is your cook a clever woman?"

"Sufficiently so to follow my directions, sir."

"These are the directions, then, which you are to give both servants. Give to Mary Gurney a blind letter, instructing her to take it at once to the last house in the court I have mentioned, and to wait for an answer."

"Yes."

"I do not want her accosted by any person before she has entered the court. Therefore give your cook a mission in the same direction, that they may go in company as far as the court."

"I understand!"

"Yet mark me, sir! So instruct your cook, which had best be done when Mary is not present, as to insure her leaving the girl at the entrance of the court. I wish Mary Gurney to enter the court alone and without misgivings."

"I understand you perfectly, sir. But why do you not have one of your officers in civilian dress fall in near Mary and accompany her as far as the court. That would probably obviate the danger of her being accosted by any person on the street."

"And, also, possibly rouse the suspicion of the very person I suspect may accost her after entering the court!" said Keene, curtly.

"Ah, I see! Well, well, I can effectually do my part."

"Within ten or fifteen minutes of the time you receive the signal?"

"Easily, sir."

"That is all, then. Have no fears concerning the girl. There will be many near by who will insure her safe return home!"

It was said rather significantly, and the broker smiled.

* * * *

Massachusetts Avenue presented its usual aspect that same evening. The electrics glowed as brightly; there were as many people moving to and fro; the stores were as brilliant and attractive.

But, for some reason, the incandescent light which usually illumined the court near Broker Honeywell's residence failed to spread its yellow glow over the house walls and pavements. It was gloomier in there, with only the light of the stars far overhead; and only the last of the three brick dwellings showed a lighted room.

So the dusk had deepened into darkness that night, and the bells on the clock towers had tolled the hour of eight.

At the curbing nearly opposite Honeywell's residence, a lad in knickerbockers stood leaning on a wheel, laughing and chatting with a companion.

The house opposite wore precisely the same aspect as in the evening before.

Not a patrolman was in sight.

Of all the people coming and going, there appeared to be none who carried an intimation of the strategic move that was pending,

the spirit of which should have been in the very air.

Presently a man passed near the lad with a wheel, and said in passing:

"Ring off, Harry!"

Instantly the shrill ringing of a bell rose on the night air, again and again and again; and then the lad mounted the wheel and was off down the street.

Nobody wondered.

From a little distance away, on the opposite side, the figure of a tall and powerful man was approaching, with a roll in his gait, with his cap drawn low over his brow, and his features sombre, sullen and set.

He passed Honeywell's house with but a glance through the hall-door window of stained glass; then turned about at the first crossing and retraced his steps. Twice he passed the door; then he crossed to the opposite side. And the sullen look grew darker and his firm lips firmer.

Then he saw the house door opened, and a woman and a girl emerge and move away.

His face changed like a flash, and his eyes turned to fire.

The cook felt the girl trembling before they fairly had reached the court entrance.

"Phat's the matter wid ye, Mary, that ye're shakin' so?" she asked, kindly.

The girl tried to laugh, but failed.

"Nervous, I—I think!" she faltered, half-gasping the words with a timid glance aside.

"Don't be losin' the lettther, lass."

"No, I'll not. I—I have it here."

"And here's the coourt now, lass."

The girl halted and stood for a moment, shivering violently.

"It's darker down—down in there! Don't you want—Bridget, don't you want to go with me while I take the letter?"

The cook laughed encouragingly.

"Faith, the master told me to hurry, lass, and hurry I must. Run on wid ye! Sure, lass, nuthin'll harm the loikes o' you!"

And, surely, the cook believed what she said.

Mary Gurney entered the court alone. But she did not walk. She rather ran the length of the blind little street as fast as her feet would take her, much as children run under the impulse of visionary terrors.

She reached the door of the last house and rang the bell.

It was answered almost immediately by a man in black.

"A letter from Mr. Honeywell, sir! I'm to wait for an answer!" gasped the girl.

There now was a second figure in the gloomy court, a figure stealing along 'near the buildings, a figure bent nearly double and moving with the caution of a cat.

The man at the last door read his missive at a glance.

"The answer is yes!" he said, shortly, and abruptly closed the door.

The girl turned to fly back the way she had come, and within twenty feet had rushed into the very arms of the man there to receive her. A single word, with a half-

smothered scream, broke from her terrified lips.

"Barney!"

"Silence!"

Both instinctively had spoken in their native tongue.

There were other figures now in the gloomy court; but these two had no eyes for any other.

The face of the Swede was as white as that of the girl he held crushed in his arms, and his eyes were aglow with a light like that of madness.

"I've caught you alone again, at last!" he cried, hoarsely, holding her fast. "I've watched—"

"Barney—let me go! You hurt! Let me go!"

"Not I, Mary Gurney! You will go with me when you go! I let you go once on a promise you'd not forget me—the promise you'd wait me here and make me the wife you'd agreed! You—"

"Barney—"

"Hearken to me, I say! You turned false to your promise made before you sailed—"

"You said you'd write!"

"So I did write!"

"I never heard—never received it!"

"You lie!" the Swede cried, with a passion utterly beyond containing. "You have turned false! You would have wed another! I knew it after your words of a week ago! I watched you! I saw your meetings—saw you go to his house—"

"Barney—"

"Hearken! You shall do what I bid! You shall go away with me on the promise you made me! You—"

"I will not! Don't—Barney! Let me go! You hurt me! Your hands—"

"Do you fear there's blood on them? Is it that? Is it that? He had robbed me of you, and I had a right to slay him! I came here from Sweden for you and I found—what eyes! Will you dare betray me? Will you? Will you dare—"

"No—no! Barney, I cannot—breathe! I—oh, let me go!"

The girl, in the mad clasp of a frenzied man, a man on the verge of mania, was fainting and sinking to her knees.

Her last words had broken from her lips with a piteous scream.

It was echoed by the sound of a rolling whistle, the shrillness of which penetrated every corner of the gloomy court.

The girl sank senseless upon the pavement.

The Swede started up and about, like a man suddenly brought out of a dream.

A half dozen men were closing around him, and a voice in his own tongue cried, sternly:

"Asbrand, you are under arrest!"

CHAPTER X.

CONCLUSION.

Involving, as it does, but little other than a more explicit statement of the causes which

had led up to the killing of Carroll Banks, the rest may be briefly told.

It appeared that, before emigrating from Sweden, Mary Gurney had responded to the affectionate advances of Asbrand, who was a penniless Swedish sailor, to the extent of promising to marry him in America, in event of his obtaining the means of a livelihood and joining her here.

During the first few months of the following year, Asbrand had occasionally written to the girl and she to him. It appeared, however, that none of his letters had reached her, whereupon she ceased writing, and had assumed that their relations had been terminated by the man himself.

What the precise effect of this was upon Asbrand will never be known. For after his arrest and imprisonment, which was accomplished with far more difficulty than requires description, the man rapidly developed a most acute form of mania, and within a week died a raving madman in the hospital ward.

Meantime Mary Gurney had told all that she knew of the affair, making a statement which only frightened and her uncertainty as to the guilt of Asbrand had led her temporarily to withhold.

It appeared that Banks had incidentally befriended her in some simple way, and evidently had been so smitten with her artless beauty that he had made her genuine protestations of love.

It had not proved a difficult matter for him to awaken a reciprocal affection, and the girl had been prevailed upon to visit the rooms which he had claimed to have furnished for their temporary home, and where he had assured her they would be married.

At his solicitation, however, she had kept the design secret from the Honeywells.

Furthermore, about a week before the crime, Asbrand had turned up and discovered the girl. Naturally enough, after so long a period of separation, and with her better prospect, as she regarded it, in view, her affection for the Swede had waned, and she declined further to consider his demands, for such they then became.

Precisely what the Swede's movements were thereafter cannot be traced. But the culmination of them, beyond any doubt, was the tragic death of his rival.

As one of the participants said of it in the office at headquarters next morning: "It for a time was a mighty obscure case."

"And it required good work, Detective Keene, to run down the right party! More than merely good work, in fact! Very creditable work!"

Detective Keene appreciated that the credit had, in a complimentary way, been bestowed upon him. He glanced over his shoulder to ascertain the speaker and beheld standing in the doorway of headquarters, with a genial smile on his florid face—Chief Inspector Watts.

THE END.

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